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The behaviour of police officers, particularly those at the operational frontline, attracts a high level of public scrutiny with frequent calls for increased accountability. The results of negative behaviour, or perceived faulty or biased decision-making, can affect the reputation of the whole organization and leave an enduring impression upon the public. Understanding the influences on police officer decision-making and behaviour, particularly those that an organization can change or control, can lead to optimal behaviour, improved police effectiveness and enhanced public confidence.

This Working Paper looks at the police as an organization, and the influences on positive and negative officer decision-making and behaviour, specifically detailing concepts of organizational culture and climate. Approaches to the measurement of these are outlined and the discussion concludes by proposing a mixed-method approach to understanding police culture to improve police behaviour. The behaviours of police vehicle accidents and the use of force are presented as examples to illustrate the approach.

Measuring the impact of organisational culture and climate on police officers' decisions and behaviour

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Influences on Decision-Making and Behaviour

While, traditionally, social scientists have conducted research on behaviour by using individuals as the unit of analysis, modern behavioural theories acknowledge a more sophisticated relationship between the person and situation. People's behaviour is usually predicted to be a product of factors arising from the individual's interaction with the environment – for example a person's personality affects the way that they perceive a situation, and their experience affects their propensity towards certain learned responses. The analysis of individual characteristics - including personality types, belief systems and attitudes - provides only a partial explanation of decision-making and behaviour (see Rokeach 1972).

Where (the study of) behaviour of employees is concerned, an added feature of the 'environment' is the organisation for which they work. Thus, influences on decision-making and behaviour can be derived from organisational theory. Such a perspective uses the structural setting as the unit of analysis (see Maguire 2003).

Police officers, even with their powers of discretion, do not exist with complete autonomy; they are embedded in organisational environments that exert a substantial influence on their behaviour. Police organisations provide both formal and informal rules of conduct – explicit or implicit – and consequences for breaking those rules. Indeed, officers are guided by an array of formal policies and procedures that are generally followed voluntarily, but are also enforced by the threat of discipline. While there are many similarities among organisations involving shared aspects of structure and common processes - including power, performance, socialisation, supervision, control, discipline, and accountability, as well as environment, and customs (see Vaughan 2002) - differences in the properties of these constructs can produce contextual variation.

In contrast to formal structures, informal rules are cultivated through discussions of personal and professional issues between officers in a range of settings (Waddington 1999; Alpert & Fridell 1992). Some of these discussions involve what they do, the way they perform their tasks, how they use discretion, as well as organisational development, management and leadership styles. Thus, officers socialise each other into holding particular beliefs and opinions about their job and organisation. The ways that the basic sets of systems are communicated and perceived – the sharing and acceptance of work-related judgments, values and norms among officers – represent the organisational culture.

It is these organisational influences that are important for managers to understand so that they can modify behaviour. When trying to understand the structure and function of an organisation, the relationships between institutional and environmental influences, and among actors, must be examined, and their impact on behaviour must be taken into consideration. Research should be conducted to determine the best ways to change culture and the effect such change will have on the types of policing that matter the most to the agency and communities they serve.

Jerome Skolnick informs us that being a police officer is “a defining identity, almost like being a priest or a Rabbi” (Skolnick 2008: 35). The critical occupational element that sets the police apart from other professions is the necessity to intervene in the lives of citizens, with the unique governmental authority to use physical force. Dealing with danger and having to analyse and respond to threats, distinguishes the officer from others and defines his or her presentation of self. How officers learn to behave within their organisation and develop their identity are important questions to consider.

Organisational influences on police decision-making and behaviour

Improvements to police officer behaviour in risky and also routine activities, such as daily interactions with citizens, driving, felony stops, or use of force, may be substantially influenced by the culture of police organisations. Consistent with the broader empirical literature on organisations, policing scholars have long noted the existence of an informal work culture and its influence on behaviour. This culture has been described by some scholars as central to informing officers how to perform in their often ambiguous and unpredictable work environment.

Paoline (2003) argues that Westley (1953) and subsequent researchers who identified other cultural dimensions (Skolnick 1966; Neiderhoffer 1967; Van Maanen 1974) were framing police culture as a coping mechanism for negotiating their operational and organisational work environments. The *operational environment* represents the context where officers interact with citizens, whereas the *organisational environment* reflects interaction with the agency (i.e. fellow officers, supervisors, agency leadership, policies).¹ Each of these environments involves a degree of ambiguity, and the norms and values linked to broader culture themes are argued to provide behavioural guidance to officers.

Some authors have further emphasised the positive aspects of police culture including solidarity and trust that enable officers to rely on each other in a potentially dangerous and hostile environment (Ruess-Ianni 1993). However, others have framed the same cultural aspects as the basis for deviant behaviour, resistance to agency policy, and resistance to change among officers (see Crank 2005). Indeed, police culture is often portrayed as negative. For example, explanations of police misconduct and corruption (and associated prevention strategies) are increasingly acknowledging the importance of organisational and social influences (Porter 2005). Further, metaphors of the ‘rotten barrel’ and even ‘rotten orchard’ have been used, acknowledging the movement beyond the individualistic ‘rotten apple’ theory of corruption (Punch 2003), towards the influence of culture and systems.

As organisations, police agencies have shared structures and procedures, but they are implemented differently and impact their officers differentially (Greene Alpert & Styles 1992). Organisational systems can affect the ability of an organisation to learn and mature. While most organisational research has focused on how to do things properly, there are some studies of how organisations learn and promote the wrong things. Results from this research suggest that the failure of feedback systems and responses to errors can limit innovation (see Roberts 1993 and Crozier 1964). Culture can also impact on individual employees’ commitment, productivity and job satisfaction (O’Neill Marks & Singh 2007; O’Toole 2002).

Organisational climate versus culture

The organisational environment, and the individual’s relationship to it, can be understood in terms of concepts of climate and culture. Denison (1996) discusses at length the distinctions and overlaps of the two, including definitions, conceptual frameworks and methodologies. A summary of the defining features and their differences are provided in Table 1.

Definitions

Denison (1996: 624) describes *climate* as “rooted in the organisation’s value system” but “largely limited to those aspects of the social environment that are consciously perceived by organisational members.” Denison further explains that climate tends to be described “in

¹ Paoline (2003) uses the term occupational instead of operational, however, we find the second term to be a more accurate description of the context.

Table 1: Differences between traditional literatures of organisational climate and culture.

Feature		Climate	Culture
Definition	<i>Focus of interest</i>	Organisation's value system and how members interpret and respond	Values, beliefs and norms of members
	<i>Organisational elements of interest</i>	Formal	Informal
Framework	<i>Relationship to behaviour</i>	Behaviour is a product of the person and their environment	Behaviour is a product of an identity that is transmitted through socialisation between members
	<i>View of organisations</i>	Organisations are comparable – allows generalisable knowledge and measurement of variation	Organisations are unique
Methodology	<i>Methods</i>	Quantitative – e.g. surveys	Qualitative – e.g. field observations, interviews and focus groups
	<i>Measurement</i>	Surface structure measured by dimensions	Deep structure

terms of a fixed (and broadly applicable) set of dimensions.” Climate is, therefore, a product of the formal organisational systems but is largely understood by way of the organisational members’ perceptions of and responses to those systems. It is viewed as being subject to direct control by the organisation. Organisational climate is concerned with the practices and behaviours that get rewarded and supported by the organisation (Schneider Benjamin Ehrhart & Macey 2011), but includes subjective thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Denison 1996).

In contrast, *culture* is concerned with the deeper structure of the organisation that occurs through less formal processes of socialisation between organisational members. As Denison (1996: 624) describes, “[c]ulture is rooted in the values, beliefs and assumptions held by organisational members. Meaning is established through socialisation to a variety of identity groups that converge in the workplace”.

Conceptual frameworks

Denison (1996) asserts that the study of organisational climate and culture both attempt to understand the norms and values of organisations, but they are rooted in conceptual frameworks and orientations that are disconnected. He notes that organisational climate research is grounded in Lewin’s (1951) field theory, which proscribes behaviour as a product of the person and his environment. Organisational climate is the product of the “objective” conditions set by the leadership, and “subjective” interpretation and response of the employees to these conditions (see Tagiuri & Litwin 1968; Litwin & Stringer 1968). This conceptualisation provides the basis for comparative research on organisations that attempts to identify the climate characteristics or dimensions and their ability to achieve desired goals, such as efficiency, safety or reliability (see Zohar 1980; Weick Sutcliffe & Obstfeld 1999). This analysis subsequently provides the basis for understanding how organisational leadership can make changes that alter the climate to better achieve those desired goals.

In contrast, the study of organisational culture emerged, in part, as a challenge to the findings of social climate researchers (Denison 1996). Denison (1996: 624) notes that the culturalist’s interest is in the underlying “values, beliefs, and assumptions held by organisational members.” It is assumed that these informal elements of an organisation are based in the unique setting of each entity that has emerged and evolved over time. Central to this conceptualisation is the position that the values of organisational members, and how they influence behaviour, are not generalisable to other organisations, given that the setting from one organisation to the next is unique. As a result, there is little focus among the culturalists to identify general principles that inform organisational leaders on how to change the culture of their organisation.

Methodologies

Differences between climate and culture are also present in the traditional empirical methodologies of each perspective. Denison (1996) observes that climate research has generally adopted quantitative methods, particularly surveys, in order to compare measures of climate

and behaviour across organisations. To understand the work or social climate, objective characteristics of the organisation and individual perceptions of those conditions must be measured. Alternatively, culture researchers have relied on qualitative methods (i.e. field observation, in-depth interviews, and focus groups) to capture the nuances of organisational norms and values, and the behaviour that results.

The methodological distinctions between these perspectives, however, has become clouded over time. Researchers from the culture perspective are increasingly incorporating the simultaneous use of qualitative and quantitative techniques to capture detailed knowledge on the norms and values of organisational members, as well as data for making comparisons within or between organisations (see Denison & Mishra 1995; Hofstede Neuijen Ohayv & Sanders 1990; Jermier Slocum Fry & Gains 1991). While these efforts do not necessarily signal the end of the climate-cultural “paradigm war” (Denison 1996), they hint at a growing interest at conceptual and methodological integration in an effort to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the norms and values of organisational members shape their behaviour.

Climate, Culture, and Policing

Elements of the climate and culture perspectives are evident in the policing literature. The early police culture research (e.g Westley 1953; Skolnick 1966; Neiderhoffer 1967; Van Maanen 1974) was consistent with the broader organisational culture perspective in utilising qualitative methods to capture in-depth knowledge on the norms and values of organizations.

William Westley’s (1953) ethnographic study, conducted during the 1940s of the Gary, Indiana police department in the United States, is generally considered the springboard for inquiry into police culture. Westley (1953; 1956) spent two years observing officers perform their routine activities and conducted in-depth interviews with them. He concluded that there was a common set of values and norms associated with violence and secrecy underlying the behaviour of officers (Westley 1953; 1956).

How police officers conduct themselves and the choices they make in routine and emergency tasks are often explained by their distinct occupational culture, including the general elements of authority, danger, pressure to produce, and suspiciousness (Skolnick 2008). These shared characteristics, or themes, often come to life through the “war stories” that people tell about their occupation. According to Manning (1980), story tellers often enhance or exaggerate what they do, and its significance, to elevate their worth or reputation, and these self-selected characteristics of the job can define what is important and what is not. The highly valued characteristics and qualities of the police in general are celebrated and glorified by officers as they explain their work (see Rojek Alpert & Smith 2012; Manning 1980).

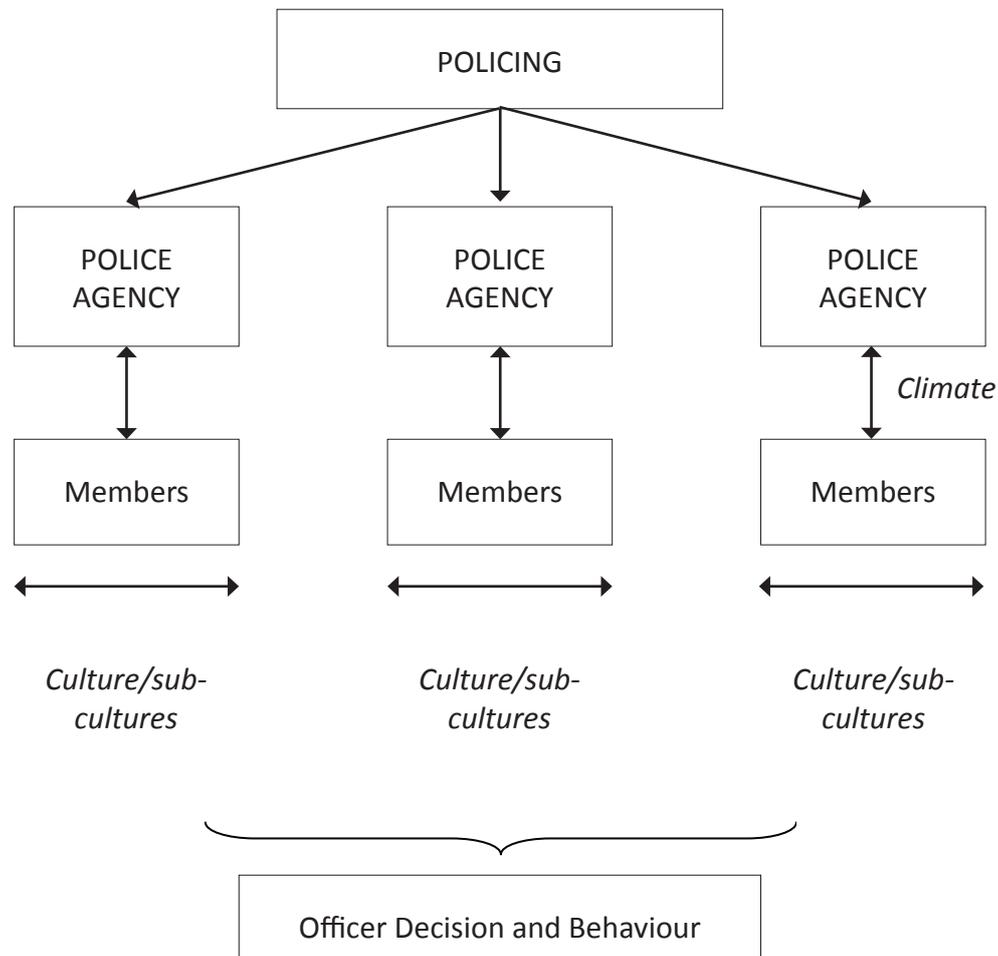
Early police researchers tended to define culture characteristics as universal for policing. The various cultural elements of danger, secrecy, violence and loyalty, among others, were found to apply universally to law enforcement officers (Paoline 2003). It was assumed that officers largely faced similar work environments, particularly their operational environment, and that this fosters a shared set of cultural values among all in policing. However, this is at odds with the broader ‘culture’ position that asserts there are unique settings for each organisation.

In contrast to the universal culture position, others have argued that police agencies operate with multiple sub-cultural schema in police organisations (see Loftus 2009; Paoline 2001; Herbert 1998; Chan 1997; Worden 1995). This is best captured in Wilson’s (1968) classic distinction of the ‘legalistic,’ ‘watchmen,’ and ‘service’ orientations among different law enforcement agencies. Wilson’s (1968) observation is consistent with Paoline’s (2001) identification of police culture as a coping strategy for ambiguity in the work environment. Logically, then, it could be argued that differences in cultural values among officers may also exist across districts in large agencies, given the potential for variations in the work environments among these geographical divisions.

Some policing scholars have also suggested different cultural values exist across the positional ranks within police agencies, such as field personnel, middle management, and command staff (Manning 1994; Paoline 2003). Others have observed variations in the norms and values among individual officers. For example, Brown (1983) argued that there are four types of officers (old-style crime-fighter, clean-beat crime-fighter, professional, and service) who varied on their orientation toward aggressiveness and selectivity of enforcement.

The more recent work on police culture (for example, Paoline and Terrill 2005) resembles the quantitative and comparative research tradition of the climate perspective. Paoline and Terrill (2005) built on the officer variation approach to explain the differences in search propensity among officers during traffic stops. They surveyed officers about their orientation toward dimensions such as interactions with citizens, perceptions of supervisors, perceived roles, and outlook on tactics related to aggressive and selective enforcement. The responses to these questions were used to categorise officers into three groups in relation to traditional assumptions of police culture (those who were pro-culture, con-culture and those midway between), which were predictive of search patterns.

Figure 1: conceptual model summarising the influences of police culture and climate on behaviour.



A more sophisticated articulation of police culture has, therefore, developed over time, providing a framework for understanding variations in officer behaviour relative to their orientation to various cultural values, which can be measured quantitatively. While this approach provides considerably more utility over the universal culture perspective, its application to understanding behaviour is very general. However, linking officer behaviour to their adoption of cultural dimensions neither informs us about the logic, or specific practices, that underlie these dimensions, nor does it explain how changes or differences in organisations (i.e. policies or technologies) impact on these more nuanced interpretations and actions. This concern for both general and detailed knowledge is not unique to the study of police culture. It reflects the debate between organisational climate and organisational culture found within the broader sociological, management and organisational psychology literature. This integrated literature offers a conceptual and methodological way to study how group norms and values shape police officer behaviour.

New paradigm: measuring the impact of culture and climate on officer behaviour

What is absent from the study of police culture is an effort to provide a comprehensive understanding of how organisational culture influences officer behaviour through the integration of the climate and culture concepts and methods. Both culture and climate are important influences on behaviour, and their differences are more interpretive than substantive (Denison 1996). Both need to be measured and analysed to determine the influence of a particular agency on its officers (see Cooper Cartwright & Earley 2001).

Figure 1 illustrates the different levels of culture and climate that, it is proposed, should be measured to form a more in-depth picture. The figure shows the separate elements, or levels, of processes, from the broad area of policing to the varied police agencies, and finally the individual members within those agencies. At the broad level, prior research suggests that police culture is identified and shaped by the shared and combined aspects of the organisation – the occupational characteristics of policing. That is, the types of factors recognised

and analysed by Skolnick (2008) and Vaughan (2002) that construct the general police culture, which exists (to varying degrees) among all agencies. However, within this broad culture, there exists variation between agencies. This is characterised by the differences of structure, power, supervision, control, discipline, and accountability, among other factors, and the member's perceptions of those dimensions, which form the organisation's personality or climate. At the next level is the influence of the organisational culture, or subcultures, that exist and perpetuate through socialisation of informal rules between members. The interaction of these influences impacts upon individual members' decision-making and behaviour in performing their duties. The model shows the importance of measuring both culture and climate. Each level also allows greater potential variation that should be measured; from the broad concepts at the top, to the smaller subcultures at the individual member level.

Mixed-methods

To explore the processes in the conceptual model fully, future research on police culture should follow the trend in the broader theoretical and empirical literature on concepts of organisational climate and culture, and incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methods (Hofstede Neuijen Ohayv & Sanders 1990). It is our proposition that cultural aspects may moderate the relationship between working climate and officer behaviour. Mixed-methods strategies can uncover both comparative and detailed knowledge of that linkage.

The purpose of a multi-method approach is not merely to reduce the likelihood, or effects, of measurement errors. The general purpose is to have more than one method to investigate different kinds of information that converge on the specific research question (see Brewer and Hunter 2006; Jick 1979). For example, in the area of occupational culture and social climate, quantitative data should be enhanced by interpretation and context (see Glaser Zamanou & Hacker, 1987).

While Paoline and Terrill (2005) used surveys of two agencies to compare officers' beliefs and behaviour concerning the general dimensions of organisational climate/culture, the analysis between the agencies received limited attention. If surveys are collected across multiple agencies, the individual officer responses can be aggregated to provide a composite of the organisational culture, which can then be contrasted with other agencies. Further, patterns in culture can be analysed in relation to agency patterns of officer behaviour, such as the driving patterns, use of force or arrest. However, the relationship between given cultural dimensions and behaviour tells only a part of the story. What is missing is information on whether different managerial styles, policies, and training are associated with the variation of cultural dimensions across organisations, which is the cornerstone of the climate perspective.

Further, while surveys (e.g. which ask about employees' professional lives or ethical orientations to hypothetical scenarios) can provide critical information about shared meanings of concepts, customs and practices, this is not a sufficient data-collecting strategy. It is just as important to "establish themes and patterns around which stories are told, legends are built, and beliefs are developed" (Glaser et al 1987: 174). If surveys are used to determine symbolic aspects of organisational life, then focus groups or interviews should be used to augment the data and put the information in its proper framework. Qualitative studies of the police place a much higher value on the *context* of what officers do, rather than the behaviour or attitudes they report, or how they respond to hypothetical situations (Worden 1995; Sherman 1980; Muir 1977; Kemp Norris & Fielding 1992).

Such mixed-methods designs are not new to the police culture literature. Brown (1983) utilised officer surveys and field observations to capture differences in the organisational cultures of three agencies. Jermier et al (1991) used officer surveys and in-depth interviews to evaluate the differences in adherence to culture norms between officers in a single agency. What can be added to these studies is the linkage of police culture to officer behaviour. Developing a more comprehensive understanding of this connection is key to efforts by agency leadership in changing officer decision-making and behaviour through modification of the organisational culture.

However, the measurement of officer behaviour can be problematic. Self-report surveys of behaviour, or hypothetical behaviour, can also be used. However, when relying solely on such quantitative data, Waddington (1999: 288) instructs us, "... this conceptual bridge looks decidedly rickety as it spans the obvious and frequently acknowledged chasm between what officers say and what they do." In the police organisation, Uidriks and Mastrigt (1991) report that it is more important for officers to act tough than be tough. In this, and other areas, it is not clear if officers would answer survey questions in ways they believe, or what they perceive, to be socially acceptable. Unfortunately, we are limited in our knowledge by our methods of inquiry.

Observations could be conducted to see how officers perform their tasks. Unfortunately, time and expense limit the use of observations. Further, behaviour can be subject to self-regulation when the subject is aware that they are being observed. New technology developments provide additional sources of observational data that may overcome some of these problems. For example, video footage of officer behaviour may be available from a number of sources including those carried by officers (e.g. body-worn video, Taser-mounted cameras), public or

private CCTV, as well as video footage taken by members of the public on mobile devices.

Other forms of more 'objective' measures of behaviour may also be used to supplement the picture of officer behaviour. Organisational data contained in police officer personnel files or performance records can provide proxy measures for behaviour; for example, plotting numbers of activities (in terms of arrests, stops etc.) against indicators of poor decision-making (such as arrest-release - i.e. without charge, excessive use of force, complaints, and disciplinary proceedings or management action against a member).

Behavioural Examples: Use of Force and Traffic Crashes

Triangulated research on police behaviour is comparatively rare. One interesting study looked at the use of force after a police pursuit through collecting official agency data and interview data from officers, supervisors and suspects (Alpert Kenney & Dunham 1997). Although it did not include any measure of agency culture or work climate, the research provides an appropriate stepping stone for our proposed approach to studying the impact of police culture on officer behaviour. Another important step in this area of research was made by Terrill Paoline & Manning (2003), who conducted research on agency culture and coercion.

By combining and improving on the approaches used in earlier research, investigations can be designed to explore the impact of culture on behaviour generally, and also specific behaviours that may be particularly harmful to the public (and/or public confidence) such as the use of force or police vehicle accidents. We hypothesise that the organisational culture and work climate of an agency has a significant impact on officer decision making and the nature and extent of force, public complaints, as well as the number of officer-involved traffic crashes. We expect that within-agency differences exist as officers in the same agency are likely to report multiple sub-cultural schema, and between-agency differences also exist, as police departments will have dissimilar or varying climate characteristics. Our proposed approach includes the collection of official agency data on officer behaviour involving the use of force, crashes, and complaints, as well as survey data from officers and supervisors on culture and climate issues, including ethical climate surveys. Focus groups and interviews with officers and supervisors can then be used to put the survey data in its proper context (Paoline 2001; Glaser 1987; Dorn & Brown 2003).

Through such triangulation of methods, the various organisational influences on police decision-making and behaviour can be explored. Understanding the impact of influences that organisations can control or modify is particularly useful for encouraging positive cultures and climates that can maximise police effectiveness in their duties, as well as community confidence in police.

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